

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI
EASTERN DIVISION

JAMES H. MEADORS,)
)
 Plaintiff,)
)
 v.) No. 4:10CV582 MLM
)
)
 JANET SCHNEIDER, et al.,)
)
)
 Defendants.)

OPINION, MEMORANDUM AND ORDER

This matter is before the Court upon the motion of plaintiff for leave to commence this action without prepayment of the filing fee pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915. Upon consideration of the financial information provided with the motion, the Court finds that plaintiff is financially unable to pay any portion of the filing fee. As a result, plaintiff will be granted leave to proceed in forma pauperis pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915. Additionally, the Court has reviewed the complaint and will dismiss it pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B).

28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), the Court must dismiss a complaint filed in forma pauperis if the action is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. An action is frivolous if it “lacks an arguable basis in either law or fact.”

Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 328 (1989). An action is malicious if it is undertaken for the purpose of harassing the named defendants and not for the purpose of vindicating a cognizable right. Spencer v. Rhodes, 656 F. Supp. 458, 461-63 (E.D.N.C. 1987), aff'd 826 F.2d 1059 (4th Cir. 1987).

To determine whether an action fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, the Court must engage in a two-step inquiry. First, the Court must identify the allegations in the complaint that are not entitled to the assumption of truth. Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 129 S. Ct. 1937, 1950-51 (2009). These include “legal conclusions” and “[t]hreadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action [that are] supported by mere conclusory statements.” Id. at 1949. Second, the Court must determine whether the complaint states a plausible claim for relief. Id. at 1950-51. This is a “context-specific task that requires the reviewing court to draw on its judicial experience and common sense.” Id. at 1950. The plaintiff is required to plead facts that show more than the “mere possibility of misconduct.” Id. The Court must review the factual allegations in the complaint “to determine if they plausibly suggest an entitlement to relief.” Id. at 1951. When faced with alternative explanations for the alleged misconduct, the Court may exercise its judgment in determining whether plaintiff’s conclusion is the most plausible or whether it is more likely that no misconduct occurred. Id. at 1950, 51-52.

The Complaint

Plaintiff is a resident of the St. Louis Community Release Center. In his complaint, he seeks monetary relief under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against defendants Janet Schneider (Superintendent, St. Louis Community Release Center), the Missouri Board of Probation and Parole, and the St. Louis Community Release Center (a division of the Missouri Department of Corrections).

Plaintiff alleges that he has been “falsely imprisoned” at the St. Louis Community Release Center after the Missouri Board of Probation and Parole told him he would be “released” from “confinement.” Plaintiff also complains that he is being made to pay for his own medical treatment.

Discussion

The complaint fails to state a claim against the St. Louis Community Release Center and the Missouri Board of Probation and Parole, which are divisions of the State of Missouri, because divisions or subdivisions of state agencies are not “persons” subject to a suit under § 1983. E.g., Barket, Levy & Fine, Inc. v. St. Louis Thermal Energy Corp., 948 F.2d 1084, 1086 (8th Cir.1991). The claims against individual defendant Schneider are also subject to dismissal, as the complaint is silent as to whether this defendant is being sued in her official or individual capacity. Where a “complaint is silent about the capacity in which [plaintiff] is suing defendant, [a district

court must] interpret the complaint as including only official-capacity claims.” Egerdahl v. Hibbing Community College, 72 F.3d 615, 619 (8th Cir.1995); Nix v. Norman, 879 F.2d 429, 431 (8th Cir. 1989). Naming a government official in his or her official capacity is the equivalent of naming the government entity that employs the official, in this case the State of Missouri. Will v. Michigan Dept. of State Police, 491 U.S. 58, 71 (1989). As noted above, “neither a State nor its officials acting in their official capacities are ‘persons’ under § 1983.” Id. As a result, the complaint fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted.

Regardless, plaintiff’s claims of false imprisonment under § 1983 fail to state a claim upon which relief may be granted. The Eighth Circuit has held that “false imprisonment is a state law tort claim. It is not coextensive with the Fourteenth Amendment, which protects only against deprivations of liberty accomplished without due process of law.” King v. Beavers, 148 F.3d 1031, 1034 (8th Cir.), cert. denied, 525 U.S. 1002, (1998) (quoting Baker v. McCollan, 443 U.S. 137, 145 (1979)).

Additionally, plaintiff’s assertions that he is being made to pay for his own medical care fail to state a claim for unconstitutional medical mistreatment. In order to make a claim under § 1983, plaintiff must plead facts sufficient to indicate deliberate indifference to serious medical needs. Estelle v. Gamble, 429 U.S. 97, 106 (1976); Camberos v. Branstad, 73 F.3d 174, 175 (8th Cir.1995). Allegations of mere

negligence in giving or failing to supply medical treatment will not suffice. Estelle, 429 U.S. at 106. To show deliberate indifference, plaintiff must allege that he suffered objectively serious medical needs and that defendants actually knew of but disregarded those needs. Dulany v. Carnahan, 132 F.3d 1234, 1239 (8th Cir.1997). The allegations in the complaint do not rise to the level of seriousness necessary to state a claim of constitutional deprivation. As a result, the complaint fails to state a claim for unconstitutional medical mistreatment.

Accordingly,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that plaintiff's motion to proceed in forma pauperis [Doc. #2] is **GRANTED**.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Clerk shall not issue process or cause process to issue upon the complaint because the complaint is legally frivolous or fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or both.

An appropriate Order of Dismissal shall accompany this Memorandum and Order.

Dated this 6th day of May, 2010.



HENRY EDWARD AUTREY
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE